

Children's Services Committee

Report title:	Statement of Purpose of Norfolk's Fostering Services Annual Review
Date of meeting:	12 September 2017
Responsible Chief Officer:	Matt Dunkley Interim Executive Director of Children's Services
Strategic impact <p>Every fostering service has a statutory requirement to publish, and regularly update, a document which describes the ethos and goals of the fostering service, its management and oversight arrangements and the experience of its staff.</p> <p>This Statement of Purpose (appendix 1) is a public document, approved by the Children's Services Committee before being made available to foster families, fostered children, their birth parents and guardians, and staff working in the field of fostering. It is also inspected by OFSTED (Office of Standards in Education).</p> <p>The committee paper will focus on a performance review of Norfolk Fostering Service.</p>	

Executive summary

The key strengths:

- Further developing the Norfolk Fostering Advisory Partnership introducing a new training bordure and a compulsory continuous professional development portfolio for foster carers.
- Increased the number of in house foster placements to 447 (31 March 2017) compared to 427 the previous year
- The proportion of Norfolk Foster Carers who have completed the Children's Workforce Development Council training – "Certificate in Training, Support and development Standards for Foster Care" remains very high
- Permanence decisions are made at the earliest opportunity via a permanence monitoring group and we have introduced a panel to agree long term foster placements ensuring children's needs are met and resources are provided if required.
- Ensured scrutiny of fostering panel minutes and the identification of key themes to improve opportunities and support to foster carers
- Established and grown the new kinship team.

The key areas of challenge:

- Recruiting more foster carers this year's target is 40 new foster carers rising to 60 the following year and 80 in 2020/21. National statistics show in 2016 applications to be a foster carer fell by a third from 16,920 to 11,460
- Providing foster homes for children stepping down to foster care having lived in children's homes.
- Work across children's services to implement the improvement plans and ensure the right children are in the right placement for the right amount of time. Including achieving 470 placements by December 2017.
- Mental health and wellbeing of our children in foster care.

Next year we will:

- Improve our fostering website (September 2017) to include short videos.
- Review staffing with in the recruitment team to create a duty worker role to improve the experience of perspective foster carers.
- Run social media recruitment campaigns in June September and January 2017.
- Develop a model of hub foster carers focussed on providing step down placements to family life for children in residential care.
- With the fostering advisory partnership ensure the needs of children in foster care are addressed in the recommissioning of child and adolescent mental health service.

Recommendations:

To recommend the approval of the statement of purpose to full Council and provide scrutiny and challenge to the fostering service.

1. Proposal

- 1.1 Members are asked to scrutinise the information within the report and provide challenge to the service to ensure continued improved outcomes for Norfolk children and families.
- 1.2 Members are asked to recommend approval to full Council of the Statement of Purpose and Functions for the Local Authority Fostering Service to comply with the Care Standards Act 2000.

2. Evidence**2.1 Norfolk Fostering Service recruits, assesses, approves and supports the following types of foster carers:**

- Long term foster care
- Short term foster care, including pre-adoption and pre-permanence
- Emergency foster care
- Friends and Family foster care
- Parent and child foster placements
- PACE foster care (established following the service's Ofsted inspection of November 2011 as PACE – Police and Criminal Evidence Act beds to prevent young people staying overnight in custody suites)
- Short break foster care and support foster care.
- Step down placements for children in residential care

2.2 The service is made up of the following teams:

- Three Fostering Support Teams who supervise and support foster carers (this includes on-going training needs)
- A Fostering Recruitment Team with responsibility for assessing and training prospective foster carers
- County Children with Disabilities Service – which runs two resource centres (short break residential units) and provides support to disabled children and young people to access the most appropriate services

- A new kinship Care team to offer assessment, support, advice and assistance to special guardians

2.3 Numbers of children in Foster Care, Foster Carers, number of Carer Households and Placement Stability.

- 2.3.1 At 31st March 2017, 447 children and young people were placed in mainstream and friends and family foster homes provided by Norfolk Fostering Service.
- 2.3.2 71 young adults remained in their foster placement after their 18 birthday, supported by Norfolk County Council.
- 2.3.3 Norfolk Fostering Service supported 694 approved foster carers across Norfolk at the end of March 2016 in 398 households, including 294 mainstream foster care households, 72 friends and family (kinship) foster carers and 32 short breaks carers.
- 2.3.4 14 Foster Carer placements were subject of unplanned endings in 2016/17, compared with 6 and 18 for the two years before. Nationally in 2016 2,910 children experienced an unplanned placement ending representing a rate of 5.6% the Norfolk rate is 3.1%.

2.4 Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers

- 2.4.1 In 2016/17 we had 272 initial enquiries and 140 newly approved fostering households of these households 119 were temporary approvals of friends or family carers and 41 were fully approved foster carers following a panel of which 21 were task centred foster carers. In the same period 154 households left the register of which 107 were temporary friends and family foster carers usually becoming special guardians and 43 were mainstream foster carers. So overall in 2016/17 we had a net loss of 20 mainstream fostering households. The director of children's service has taken decisive action to deal with this, by moving temporary approvals of friends and family foster cares and these assessments to the kinship care team and setting stretch targets for the fostering service in terms of recruitment and placement numbers (see above).
- 2.4.2 On average Norfolk fostering service has 40 vacancies it can match to at one time. Foster carers can be on hold for a variety of reasons including family circumstance, ill health, the needs of a child already placed or rarely as a result of concerns of allegations.

2.5 Concerns and Allegations against Carers and Child Protection Enquiries

- 2.5.1 There were 18 referrals and discussions with the Local Authority Designated Officer relating to Norfolk foster carers between April 2016 and March 2017 of which 7 resulted in an investigation. This compares to 1 the year before and 29 the year before. All our foster carers have access to an independent advice and mediation worker employed by the fostering network and based in Norfolk.
- 2.5.2 Our foster carers are provided with individual membership of the Fostering Network – this provides access to a comprehensive website which includes library items on fostering, help lines, legal and medical advice, stress counselling and a new on-line community. It also provides the support of a

solicitor and a worker who provides advice, mediation and advocacy for our foster carers. The Fostering Network is well used by our carers.

2.6 Incidents of Restraint and Children Going Missing from Care

- 2.6.1 There were 5 incidents of restraint on children by Norfolk foster carers between April 2016 and March 2017 compared to 0 and 9 in the previous 2 years. All our foster carers are taught de-escalation techniques restorative approaches and longer courses are available to help carers therapeutically re parent children
- 2.6.2 Thirteen children/young people went missing from a Norfolk foster home in 2016/17 on 37 separate occasions. Last year 8 children were missing on 17 occasions. As a percentage 2.9% of children went missing from a Norfolk foster home compared with a national percentage of 5.8% in 2015/16.

2.7 Support for, and Supervision of, Foster Carers

- 2.7.1 Every year, foster carers should be reviewed by their supervising social worker to ensure their continued appropriateness for the fostering task (an Annual Review). The number of fostering households who have not had an annual review within the last 12 months to 31. As a percentage 93% of review are in time scale all of the overdue reviews are being actively worked and in 8 cases the review has been written and is with the foster carer for comment. The table below shows a breakdown of the length of time reviews are overdue.

Time Overdue (months)	Number
0-<1	17
1-<3	11
3-<6	2
6+	2

- 2.7.2 Norfolk Fostering Service should complete one unannounced visit to each fostering household per year. As at 4 August 2017, 31 carer households had not had an unannounced visit within timescales visits were undertaken Urgent attempts are being made to visit these households but as the visits are unannounced there is often no one at home.
- 2.7.3 Foster Carers are required to have up-to-date DBS (Disclosure and barring service that replaced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)) checks. As at 7 August 2017, 1 of 694 foster carers are awaiting up to date DBS checks and this is 2 days out of date.
- 2.7.4 Norfolk Fostering Service has a duty desk, which provides 24 hour telephone cover, staffed by experienced social workers from the service outside of normal office hours, and by specialist carer support workers during office hours. This means that if a carer is unable to reach their allocated social worker, there is ALWAYS a person to contact and help with any problems they might be facing.
- 2.7.5 In the last three years 15 fostering households have transferred from being agency foster carers to becoming in-house foster carers. They are clear the

quality of support and training offered is a key factor in their decision to transfer. In the last 3 years no foster carers have left Norfolk Fostering Service to join an agency.

2.8 Foster Carer Training

- 2.8.1 Foster carers are encouraged to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) certificate in 'Training, Support and development Standards for Foster Care'. Foster carers are meant to complete this training within 12 or 18 months of their approval. Currently (10 August 2016) 7 fostering households have not completed in their relevant timescale or 98.% of carer household have completed or are on course to complete within time scales.
- 2.8.2 Norfolk Fostering Service provides a wide range of training opportunities for foster carers. In addition to the mandatory courses of safeguarding and emergency aid, a variety of long and short courses are available both face-to-face and on-line via e-learning technology. Additional training is provided by Norfolk Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB), which carers often attend directly without the explicit knowledge of the fostering service. Carers are also able to access training courses provided by BREAK. This is done via the NCC Learning and Development team so that places can be monitored. Training is overseen by the fostering advisory partnership and all training is co delivered by foster carers who have been selected and trained as trainers.

The following table shows attendance at courses run from September 2016 –August 2017

Course name	No of sessions	cancelled	No. of FC
MANDATORY COURSES			
First Aid for Foster Carers	15	0	146
Introduction to Safeguarding for Foster Carers	5	0	64
CORE COURSES			
Bridging to Adoption	4	0	28
Child Sexual Exploitation	2	0	31
Delegated Authority Training	1	0	23
Equality and Diversity	2	0	20
Introduction to the Secure Base	2	0	26
Norfolk Steps (De-escalation Training)	6	0	66
Signs of Safety Briefings	6	2	40
Stepping Stones	12	0	138
SHORT COURSES			
ADHD Awareness	2	0	45
Foetal Alcohol Syndrome	2	0	41
Helping Looked After Children to Learn	2	0	33
Introduction to Life Story Work	2	0	34
Moving and Handling	4	4	0

Paediatric First Aid	2	0	12
Parent and Baby Placements	2	0	19
Supporting the Mental Health needs of LAC	2	0	33
Understanding Developmental Trauma and Attachment	3	0	53

LONG COURSES

Solihull Training	12	0	168
Nurturing Attachments	19	0	237
Secure Base Training	10	0	100

OTHER

TAC Conference			156
Foster Carer Self-Service Feedback	1	0	2
Foster Carer Statement of Purpose	1	0	6

2.8.3 In addition to this training with the fostering advisory partnership we run 6 support groups across the county and delivered a conference on trauma attended by over 100 foster cares. The service has also delivered signs of safety workshops to over 90 foster carers.

2.8.4 This year we have introduced a continuous professional development portfolio that foster carers can log learning from all sources and link it to improving their practice. From January 2017 these portfolios will be part of their annual review and to be eligible to future placements foster carers will need to demonstrate their learning in practice.

2.9 Complaints

2.9.1 Between April 2016 and March 2017, Norfolk County Council received 6 complaints relating to the fostering service.

2.9.2 As a result of complaints we have and our work with the fostering advisory partnership we have issued:

- Guidance on Contact and Fostering Network books purchased/distributed to each support group.
- Guidance and workbook devised on Carers Recording.
- Deep Dive into Health and Wellbeing – Charter (ongoing).
- Event for fostering family at Open.
- Guidance on placement endings.
- Form devised for hearing the child's voice at carers annual reviews.
- TAC – Social Workers Profile rolled out and given/posted to children when they have a new worker.
- New Children with Disabilities FAP group.
- Improve the use of Children's Centres (ongoing).
- Involvement of Staying Put, NIPE and Compass within FAP.
- FAP involvement in Education Conference and the Virtual Schools 'Foster Carer Forum'.
- Term Time Holiday guidance for carers.

3. Finance Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications from recommending this report

4. Issues, risks and innovation

4.1 It is critical in performing its duty as a corporate parent that the committee scrutinises the functioning of its fostering service.

5. Background

5.1 Please see attached Statement of Purpose (appendix 1)

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, e.g. equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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